

Lois DeMott
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May 6, 2009

Dear Michigan House Judiciary Committee:

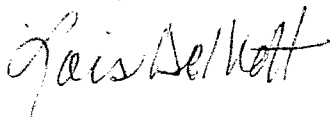
Today you have the opportunity to restore justice to many youth, adults and families within the State of Michigan. I am asking your support of House Bills 4518 and 4594-4596. These bills are necessary to reform our States harsh and inhumane sentencing requirements regarding life imprisonment without the chance of parole for juveniles.

I was alarmed when I read that our state has one of the highest rates of imposing such sentences of "juvenile life without parole". First and foremost, juveniles do not belong incarcerated in this adult prison system to begin with, which I have had to experience firsthand. This adult system does not have policies or directives in place for juveniles, nor appropriate care or treatment for the juveniles.

One must also look at the factual evidence that a child's brain is not fully developed until around age of 25. Nor can juveniles choose to vote, be drafted into the military, obtain a marriage license, serve on a jury, purchase cigarettes or alcohol. Nor does this state have competency guidelines in place for the juveniles. This is the only circumstance in which a juvenile can be considered an adult. This is horrific. A juvenile is NOT an adult.

The children in our state, who were sentenced as a child- do deserve a second chance. We need to allow them that chance today. We must demand our state recognize human rights and children's rights. We have international consensus that children shall not be held to the same standards as adults, yet we have allowed it to continue on here in Michigan. I am ashamed by our lack of humanity and our treatment of children within this state. I hope today you will consider all that is before you, and you will give our future children, their families, and those who have been sentenced previously to life in prison a reason to have hope.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lois DeMott".

Lois DeMott
Advocate, Crusader, Mother of previously incarcerated juvenile.